

Policy Committee Update #7

January 20, 2011 - J. Karmel

The Policy Committee met in the Library Conference Center on Tuesday, January 18, from 12:00 – 1:00 and discussed the following items:

- 1) The members reviewed quickly the Academic Dishonesty and Electronic Devices policies, and agreed that both policies were ready to go on the School Council agenda for presentation and discussion at the February 3 meeting.
- 2) The members reviewed the current Absenteeism Policy #09-03, looking at streamlining the policy to allow for an earlier and more effective intervention by the school's administration for chronic absenteeism at the high school level. It was explained that there are only 3-4 students that would currently fit this designation. Common to these situations is a lack of parental response to the School's attempts to communicate the problem and address the attendance situation.

It was generally agreed by the committee members present that three *unexcused* class absences (e.g., no phone call from home, no reason given for the absence following a student's return, confirmed skipping) is sufficient to warrant a phone call home to request a meeting with parents/guardians to address this concern. Failure to address the concern could result in the student participating in a parallel academic program in the Learning Assistance room under the supervision of the Learning Assistance teacher.

Joe explained that the Learning Assistance room is currently developing the capacity to offer students with chronic absenteeism a self-paced, independent learning program. Students who have fallen far behind their classmates, making completion of a course highly improbable, would be recommended to attend Learning Assistance in Room 10 for specific subjects, where all teaching, assessment, grading, and reporting will be done through the Learning Assistance teacher using a parallel core curriculum from the Pro-Active curriculum series. The Learning Assistance Teacher, Colin McIntosh, is currently collaborating with Bill Bennett, Principal of the Independent Learning Center (ILC) in Whitehorse, and will make a visitation to the Center to learn more about the program. Both the Yukon Department of Education and the BC Ministry of Education accept this curriculum for graduation.

The development of an on-site, Independent Learning Center enables our high school to diversify learning opportunities and provide supervised distance and distributed learning as well as one-on-one, remedial classroom instruction. At this time, two students with chronic absenteeism are benefiting from this option for one-on-one English 9 and Math 9 instruction, while one of these students is also participating in a home-based learning opportunity to complete credits in Physical Education 9 and Foods 9.

Amendments to the existing policy and procedures below have been underlined:

Rationale:

It is difficult to accommodate irregular attendance without affecting the quality and flow of classroom instruction. Chronic absenteeism impacts a student's progress in school and may even jeopardize his/her ability to earn sufficient credits to pass. Addressing chronic absenteeism will require collaboration among parents, school and, in some cases, various social agencies in the community. Finding long-term strategies may include the development of an on-campus independent learning center (ILC), where students can work under a flexible timetable designed to accommodate part-time learners.

Policy:

- I. Teachers will record attendance every class, and report absenteeism to the office at the start of each period.
- II. A student is responsible for making up any work missed owing to an absence from school.
- III. If students know in advance that they will be missing school, it is expected that they will inform their teachers and make arrangements to get their assignments in advance and complete the work so as not to fall behind in their studies.
- IV. If the school is not notified of a student's absence the office staff will contact the parents/guardians to report the absence and inquire as to the reason. Upon returning to school the student is expected to see their respective teacher(s) and make arrangements to receive and complete any assignments missed during the absence.
- V. Unexcused absenteeism will be considered excessive after 3 absences in a semester and request that the parents/guardians and student meet to address the situation.
- VI. Should the parents, guardians, and/or student fail to address the situation and/or the absenteeism continues, the School will provide an alternative, parallel learning program, through the Learning Assistance room, in the specific subject areas affected by the absenteeism.

The suggested amendments will be brought to the February 3 School Council meeting for discussion.

3) *The next Policy Committee meeting will be held on February 1, from 12:00 – 1:00 in the Library Conference Room.* The focus of this meeting will be on establishing standards, guidelines, and/or policies around promoting healthy foods at school. School Council invites members of the community with an interest in this issue to attend the Policy Committee meeting and contribute to the discussion. Teachers, Sue Dragoman (Kindergarten) and Tara McCauley (Home Economics) have been asked by Joe to attend.

J.Karmel